



About Neighborhood Networks

A Neighborhood's Economic Engine

It is undisputed that time and attention paid to infants and young children provides a foundation that can yield powerful, positive and lasting results.

It is the same for youth and adults. When equipped with essential skills, they have a foundation that enables them to develop into productive individuals.

What is the foundation? It is skills in technology, education and job training. It is good health. It is the kinds of services that strengthen families and promote economic independence and in the new millenium, access to technology and information.

These kind of foundations grow every day for residents of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing where there is a Neighborhood Networks center.

How so? The reality is that people who are better skilled, better educated, healthier and happier are more productive at home and work. By equipping individuals with job skills, a Neighborhood Networks center builds the local workforce. By providing access to education, it helps people become more knowledgeable. By providing access to health care, it keeps people healthy so they can meet life's daily challenges.

By the mid-1990s, technology had created a new link between people and the information and skills that could change their lives. But cost and other barriers were roadblocks for many residents of HUD housing and prevented them from accessing the information highway.

What is Neighborhood Networks?

Neighborhood Networks works to build self-sustaining communities that serve the needs of low-income families and seniors where they live.

Its premise is simple. Recognizing the emerging role of technology in society, HUD's philosophy was that computer skills help open the door to economic freedom for residents of HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing, while also creating stronger, healthier and safer communities.

To reduce welfare dependency and the digital divide, centers typically provide:

- Job training
- Computer training
- Job-search assistance
- Microenterprise training

To develop human potential, centers typically provide:

- GED classes
- Literacy programs
- Youth educational and recreational programs
- Government and community connections
- Health and wellness activities
- Child care services
- Transportation

Neighborhood Networks Facts...

WHAT: Neighborhood Networks is a community-based initiative launched by HUD in 1995. It encourages the development of resource and computer centers in HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing.

- More than 620 centers in operation*
- Thousands of business, community and government partners
- More than 744 properties with centers in planning*

WHO: Serves HUD-assisted and/or -insured housing residents, owners, managers, partners and communities.

*as of 08/00

Visit our website at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org

What is the need for Neighborhood Networks?

A 1999 study by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration revealed that the nation continues to face an alarming divide between those who have computer access and those who do not, and that lowest income households are the least likely to have electronic access.

Neighborhood Networks centers help bridge the "digital divide" and provide access and training to use technology, in the location most convenient to them—where they live.

Who benefits from Neighborhood Networks?

The immediate beneficiaries of a Neighborhood Networks center are the residents.

There are benefits to others, too.

- **Property owners** may experience lower vacancy rates, a stabilized tenancy, improved community pride and reduced crime.
- **Businesses and partners** have access to a new and prepared workforce.
- **Communities** work together to improve education, expand employment opportunities and increase economic self-reliance.

How are centers funded?

Neighborhood Networks centers rely primarily on local support. The initiative encourages partnership development, business opportunities and other income-generating activities. HUD also provides limited assistance and can help property owners identify additional funding sources.

Neighborhood Networks staff positions vary across centers, with a range of full- or part-time professionals and volunteers to assist with center administration, management, accounting, computer training and education.

What is HUD's role?

Nationally, HUD works behind the scenes to encourage creation and expansion of Neighborhood Networks centers. HUD staff may help guide communities through the Neighborhood Networks center development process and provide information and networking opportunities for participants to learn how to develop a center, cultivate potential partners and draw upon the experiences of existing centers.

How can I get involved?

The local Neighborhood Networks center presents exciting opportunities for every segment of the community. Whether you are an individual, academic or health care institution, social service agency, nonprofit or faith-based organization, government agency, or a corporation large or small, opportunities are diverse and abundant. You can:

- **Be a partner**, like the thousands of educational and health care institutions, organizations and businesses and corporations which have helped develop exciting programs and activities and provide valuable services.

For example:

- Social service agencies can provide support services and reach their targeted populations.
- Businesses can develop an employment program or provide centers with technical assistance, especially in the area of computer technology.
- Schools, colleges and universities can provide after-school and other learning programs by developing internships and other collaborative opportunities.
- Hospitals and community health centers can develop programs and activities which provide direct care and public education.
- **Donate** computer equipment.
- **Make** an outright contribution.
- **Be a volunteer** and donate your time.

The local Neighborhood Networks Coordinator has broad knowledge and experience in helping you define your participation in Neighborhood Networks. Visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site for the Coordinator in your area or contact the Neighborhood Networks Information Center.

For more information, contact:

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